

Integrated maritime policy for the EU

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The EU Integrated Maritime Policy (IMP) has established itself as new approach to enhance the optimal development of all sea-related activities in a sustainable manner. It has confirmed the vision that, by joining up policies towards seas and oceans, Europe can draw much higher returns from them with a far lesser impact on the environment.

Essentially the framework provided by the IMP seeks to achieve (and has started to do so)

four objectives:

- to promote integration of governance structures by making them more inclusive and cooperative;
- to build the knowledge base and cross cutting tools necessary to enable the implementation of integrated policies;
- to improve the quality of sectoral policies, through an active search for synergies and increased coherence across sectors;
- in implementing all above, to take account of specificities of the regional seas around Europe, through tailor-made solutions.

When it endorsed the EU IMP and the Blue Paper ([SEC\(2007\)1278](#)), the European Council of 14 December 2007 asked the Commission to report within two years on the achievements of the policy. The present Communication sums up these achievements and charts the course for the next phase of the IMP. It also highlights how joined-up policy-making towards our seas, maritime sectors and coastal areas can contribute to addressing challenges posed by the current global economic crisis and by the need to take decisive action against climate change and environmental degradation.

The implementation of the Action plan has progressed well. **Of the 65 actions in the plan, 56 have been launched or completed** (mostly in the form of Commission or Council acts). On 9 actions various initiatives have been undertaken, although no formal documents are adopted yet. Following the first phase, the Commission and Member States are now focusing efforts on effective **implementation on the ground**, with additional activities in all relevant policy areas pursued where needed.

The report notes that the last two years have confirmed the **IMP as a highly promising policy** providing a significant contribution to growth, jobs and environmental sustainability for Europe's coastal areas and beyond. Despite its young age, this new EU policy has already changed the way in which Europe deals with its maritime and coastal assets.

The Commission considers that these objectives will be best achieved through a combination of progress in **six strategic directions**:

1. **Integrated maritime governance** must be further enhanced. The progress registered over recent years needs to be turned into effective integrated structures at all levels of government. EU institutions, Member States and coastal regions have a particular responsibility in ensuring upstream policy integration and in adopting coherent, joined up agendas for maritime affairs, further counteracting the prevalence of isolated sectoral policy thinking. Stakeholder involvement in maritime policy-making should also be enshrined more permanently in governance structures. This should also lead to a more intense dialogue between the EU, Member State's Governments and

coastal regions, which often hold key expertise necessary for an integrated approach to Maritime Affairs. For the same reason the formation of a **crosssectoral platform** for stakeholder dialogue on maritime affairs should be supported.

2. **Cross-cutting policy tools** are of utmost importance to enhance economic development, environmental monitoring, safety, security and law enforcement on Europe's oceans and seas. In particular, maritime spatial planning, in combination with increased marine knowledge, can unblock considerable economic investment and drastically improve the way we manage our maritime spaces, preserving their ecosystems. It must become a **practical instrument on all relevant levels of governance**, including with the relevant mechanisms to ensure joined-up decision-making over cross-border investments. The integration of maritime surveillance has the potential of making a difference to the way key policy objectives such as the fight against illegal immigration, the safeguard of commercial shipping and the protection of natural resources are carried out by national authorities. Member States and the Commission will have to continue to work together on these items so that the processes which were initiated in the last two years will bear their intended fruit.
3. **The definition of the boundaries of sustainability of human activities** that have an impact on the marine environment in the years ahead, in the framework of the [Marine Strategy Framework Directive](#), will provide clarity and design a platform for the successful development of all maritime activities, paying due attention to their cumulative impacts. Hence, the implementation of this Directive will remain a key objective of the IMP, which should also develop the necessary cooperation between all relevant sectors and services to this end, including inter-alia between marine science and the marine environment policy.
4. **Sea-basin strategies** are key to a successful implementation of the IMP. This is where the priorities and the tools of the policy can be adapted to the specific geographic, economic and political contexts of each large maritime region. Co-operation with and among Member States and regions sharing a sea basin is a crucial element of success and, whenever necessary, this should be accompanied with proper dialogue with third countries sharing a sea basin with the EU. Action at the level of sub-basins can also be useful in establishing positive examples and best practices.
5. **The international dimension of the IMP** will also require more attention, as illustrated by the dedicated Communication published together with this report. Europe must take a leading role in improving global maritime governance, as it has done in the matter of piracy or with regard to destructive fishing practices. The Commission intends to strengthen dialogue with a limited number of major maritime partners and its participation in international fora and informal processes.
6. **Renewed focus on economic growth, employment and innovation**, in the present context of economic downturn, the implementation of the IMP should explore synergies between the European Energy Policy and the IMP, promoting energy generation from the sea, including renewable forms of energy, and use the sea more for energy transportation through pipelines, underwater grids and vessels. It will also be necessary to further link the EU's Climate Change Policy with IMP, by developing a strategy for adaptation to climate change in coastal and maritime areas, aiming at protecting coastal infrastructure and preserving marine biodiversity. As part of the developing debate on territorial cohesion, it will be important to ensure that maritime and coastal areas are fully taken into account.

The EU will also have to promote better maritime transport in order to **foster co-modality**, to implement the concept of the **Motorways of the Sea**, and to improve the **EU programme for short sea shipping**.

Still aiming at the economic development of maritime activities, it will be necessary to find ways and means of **further stimulating maritime employment and investment** in EU-flagged shipping, while remaining determined to advance the idea of **clean ships**. Indeed, support for innovation and research towards very low or even zero emission ships will continue to be a major part of the Community's response to the strategically important shipbuilding sector.

Lastly, the Commission is examining the **future funding needs** that IMP-related actions may involve as part of its overall reflection on the next financial perspective. The Commission intends to produce in 2010

a policy document detailing projects and initiatives aimed at further developing the above six strategic directions, following consultations with stakeholders.